Capturing Marginalised Voices in Multi–Stakeholder Development Processes

A Participant-Voice Framework

Learnings from the 3-Cities Project

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About this Brief

The brief provides a resource for engaging and capturing the voices of potentially marginalised groups in multi-stakeholder development processes that aim to generate new programmes and interventions in community settings. This resource places evidence on the needs and preferences of such groups at the centre of programme and intervention development.

This brief utilises insights from the 3-Cities Project, and its application of a set of research tools, to help inform integrative inclusion models for the participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, in their local neighbourhoods. Reflecting the involvement of the three participant groups and multiple stakeholders, the Project Team sought to develop an approach that ensured equal voice was given to all perspectives. It also needed to bring these perspectives together, in a process of co-production, to identify shared priorities for the design and implementation of neighbourhood-based programmes and interventions.

There are new pressures on public, private and community sectors to move beyond cursory consultative processes in intervention and programme development. In this light, the 3-Cities Project offers insightful and transferable learning that can be beneficial in the development of new interventions and programmes in policy, practice and research. While this research-driven approach will not suit all applications, we use the 3-Cities Project as a means of illustrating important voice-led principles that allow different forms of knowledge, information and expertise to emerge and to be valued.

Box 1: The 3-Cities Project Aim and Objectives

The 3-Cities Project aims to engage in a collaborative process to re-imagine services and communities to maximise participation for children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in their localities and cities.

Focusing on Dublin, Limerick and Galway, the 3-Cities Project has five main objectives:

1. Capture the diverse life-course perspectives of these three groups, and integrate their voices into policy and practice innovation;

2. Explore the role of community and city contexts in shaping the participatory experiences of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;

3. Critically review existing service infrastructure for supporting participation amongst these three groups in city life;

4. Underpinned by a commitment to citizen engagement, develop a shared understanding of the assets and opportunities of community living across the life course, with these groups, and local and regional stakeholders;

5. Inform the development of integrative models for participation that support and enable these three groups in their neighbourhoods and cities.

Structure of this Brief

This brief has three sections. The first section provides an overview of the development strategy of the 3-Cites Project voice-led methodology. The second section describes individual tools that were used both singularly, and in combination, to capture the voices of the different groups. The focus here is less on the specific procedures of these tools and more on the ways they – and methods like them – can contribute to the voice-led approach. An outline of how these various tools were adapted to the specific needs of each of the groups is also presented, together with ways in which they can be replicated using more general techniques for wider application. The third section draws together the key messages from the 3-Cities Project approach to present a framework for voice-led programme innovation based on a set of core principles.

Developing Voice-Led Approaches: Strategies and Considerations

A number of different factors informed how the Project Team developed the 3-Cities Project methodology. These were identified by gathering together different kinds of information from a variety of sources. For example, in the 3-Cities Project the process included:

- Conducting a review of the international academic literature on the community participation of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities;

- Identifying relevant, existing national research within the ageing, disability and youth sectors (e.g. needs-analyses; programme evaluations);

- Reviewing best-practice research approaches used in conjunction and collaboration with the three participant groups on related topics;

- Speaking to key informants, in this case practitioners and researchers, who have worked with such groups in comparable projects in similar settings.

Reviewing this information can help to pinpoint important considerations that can determine what kind of approach might be needed. For the 3-Cities Project Team, this process pointed to the need to: understand the varied meanings that different individuals and groups associate with community participation; understand people's daily lives, and their service use, in the context of their neighbourhoods; and to understand how current personal experiences of participation fit with people's life experiences. It also involved more practical dimensions, which included considering:

- *The necessary scale of the work* (*e.g. is the work focused on particular people in particular contexts or is it relevant to an entire population group*). In the 3-Cities Project, the initial starting point was children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Dublin, Galway and Limerick;

- *The range of capabilities and backgrounds of participant individuals and groups, and how particular approaches required adaptation.* In the 3-Cities Project, the participant groups involved individuals with a wide range of capacities, which meant we needed to consider how individual methods could be adapted to ensure meaningful participation of all groups, both separately and together;

- *The range of stakeholders involved in the topic and who needed to be included in the process.* In the 3-Cities Project, this included health and social care, local authority service providers and managers, community leaders, volunteers and other neighbourhood stakeholders;

- *The extent to which it is necessary to account for power imbalances between the different participant groups and stakeholders.* In the 3-Cities Project, it was important to recognise the potential for the voices of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities to be diminished by professional and perceived 'expert' stakeholder perspectives;

- *The multi-scalar levels involved in the project.* In the 3-Cities Project, while the national level, in terms of policy and practice, was likely to impact on the topic, more immediate influences were operational at the city (or regional) and neighbourhood levels.

Drawing these elements together, the 3-Cities Project Team sought a methodological approach that was multi-level (at the level of city and neighbourhood), collaborative, adaptable to working with different participant groups, and provided voice to individuals' lived experiences.

3-Cities Project Voice-Led Methodology and Tools

For this brief, we concentrate on tools used in the neighbourhood-level research that incorporated the voice and first-hand experiences of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities into the project and its collaborative process.

Box 2: The 3-Cities Project Overall Methodology

The presented here are situated within the wider methodology of the study.

The 3-Cities Project adopted an explorative qualitative approach that facilitated the gathering of real-life experiences and that allowed the Project Team to refine the focus of the research in conjunction with participants and the information they provided.

The Project involved a two-phase work programme, with data-collection at the city-level and neighbourhood-level (see figure 1). The city-level phase consisted of 12 focus groups with children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities (physical/sensory and intellectual) (n=68), nine focus groups with public, private and voluntary service providers (n=78), and interviews with public service managers (n=20). The city-level phase of work reinforced the need for a neighbourhood focus, with the findings of the first phase indicating the importance of neighbourhood context and the life-course experiences of the three participant groups in community participation. Additionally, each strand of research within the two study phases informed subsequent research activities.

The neighbourhood level focused on two neighbourhoods in each city: East Wall and the Liberties in Dublin; Claddagh and Doughiska (as a part of the broader ARD region) in Galway; and Garryowen and South Circular Road in Limerick. In all, 58 children and youth, 67 older people, 28 people with disabilities and 68 community stakeholders (service providers; community leaders and volunteers) took part in the neighbourhood level research.

Project Lifecourse

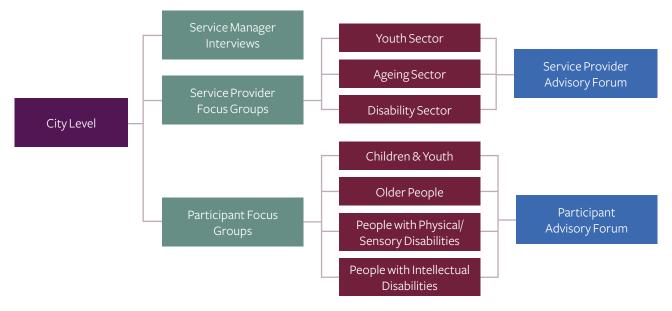Figure 1: Data-collection carried out in each of the three cities

Figure 2: Data collection carried out in each of the six neighbourhoods

The core challenge in selecting each tool was to ensure that, on the one hand, it could be used in a consistent and systematic way with all participants and, on the other, that it was sufficiently flexible to support the participation of three distinct and heterogeneous groups. Added to this was the need for some methods to be used to facilitate collaborative discussions between a diverse set of stakeholders and all three participant groups.

As singular instruments, some of these tools were not originally designed for the specific purpose of ensuring voice in a multi-stakeholder processes. They are also not representative of the full list of approaches suitable for use with marginalised groups. It was, however, the combination of these tools that helped to support the voice-led approach of the 3-Cities Project. Together with adapting each method for the Project, the Team had to consider what each tool was contributing and how these contributions fitted together in the overall methodology.

With reference to Figures 1 & 2, we focus here on five sets of tools used in the neighbourhood-level data collection of the 3-Cities Project: Collaborative Group Engagements; Life-Course Interviews; Go-Along Interviews; Citizen Research Training; Ethical Considerations. We identify the tools' specific features that hold potential value for wider application in other forms of multi-stakeholder development processes. Some of these methods are focused on enabling people to come together collaboratively to share their views and agree future actions. Some are targeted more at gathering insights from life experiences that can inform those actions, and some were designed to offer both.

1. Collaborative Group Engagement

About the tool: This refers to a collection of tools that involved variations of group discussions and collaborative engagement within the 3-Cities Project. It included Advisory Forums, Local Focus Groups and Collaborative Forums. Each tool provided a means of capturing multi-group/level perspectives and facilitated the channelling of these perspectives into a decision-making structure that helped shape the direction of the research at key points in the Project. They also helped to inform the development of subsequent tools.

- **Advisory Forums** – A Participant Advisory Forum and a Service Provider Advisory Forum were established, from a sample of city-level participants and providers respectively, to guide the neighbourhood-level work and act as a reference panel for the broader research process. The Participant Advisory Forum combined perspectives of children and youth, older adults and people with disabilities. The Service Provider Advisory Forum drew on service perspectives from the youth, ageing and disability sectors. These forums met on two occasions during the course of the research, advising on aspects of the study design, offering feedback on research findings and acting as a means to foster city-wide engagement with the neighbourhood-based work.

- **Local Focus Groups** – Two Local Focus Groups were organised in each neighbourhood. A Resident Focus Group was conducted with a purposive sample of children and youth, older people, and people with disabilities in each site. A Community Stakeholder Focus Group was conducted with key leaders and local champions, service providers from youth, ageing and disability sectors, and representatives from community development organisations, and national organisations with local remits. These discussions gathered insight on local issues, challenges and opportunities with respect to community participation. They also explored neighbourhood characteristics that either enhanced or hindered participation for the three groups.

- **Collaborative Forums** – Two Collaborative Forums, drawing together a purposive sample of participants from the two local focus groups, were held in each neighbourhood. Forum members, therefore, comprised of a mix of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, and a range of community stakeholders. The first Forum provided the opportunity for members to agree and prioritise issues with respect to participation identified in the Local Focus Groups and to establish the central questions that needed to be researched in their neighbourhood. The second Forum allowed members the opportunity to review research evidence collected in their neighbourhood and to agree recommendations and future directions to enhance participation.

How did the tool contribute to the voice-led approach?

Collaborative Group Engagement helped to embed elements of co-production within the Project and facilitated the expression of voice by participants and stakeholders.

These methods allowed for the gathering of views of different groups – children and youth, older people and people with disabilities in Advisory Forums and Local Context Focus Groups, and these groups working together with community stakeholders in the Collaborative Forums – and the development of a set of collective understandings and decisions to inform the development and refinement of the Project. The methods provided opportunities for the Project Team to gauge and adapt the research process based on city and neighbourhood-level insights and guidance.

The Local Focus Groups also functioned as a means of gathering life experiences from the three participant groups. The Advisory Forums and the Collaborative Forums served as evaluation mechanisms, allowing the Team to obtain feedback on the findings and interpretations from different strands of work, and building a sense of ownership amongst group members.

What are the main steps of the tool: The tools shared a number of common steps and features. These included: a semi-structured discussion, where the Project Team sought specific information; small sub-group discussions, where representatives from each group worked together to address particular tasks and questions; and, in the case of the Advisory Forums and Collaborative Forums, a space to present analysis from data-collection.

The Advisory Forums began with a presentation of findings from the city-level research, in which forum members had previously participated. Participants were asked if these findings accurately reflected their views. In small-groups, with each group working with an individual researcher, members worked together to identify any additional themes that they thought were important for the research. Participants were then offered the opportunity to advise on key aspects of the study methodology (in the case of the first Forum) such as neighbourhood selection, recruitment processes, and (in the case of the second Forum) strategies for dissemination.

The Local Focus Groups began with a discussion about key topics identified from the city-level findings (e.g. neighbourhood characteristics; participation in the local community). To capture individual voice, each person was then asked to conduct an illustrative exercise, using post-it notes, weekly timelines and neighbourhood maps, as a means of gathering experiences, perceptions and views on this topic. In the case of community participation, this included information on levels of community participation, perceived neighbourhood boundaries, areas in the neighbourhood of concern and areas of opportunity. Each individual was then asked to provide feedback to smaller discussion groups. The individual post-it notes were grouped together with those of other participants, and acted as a reference for group deliberations that explored commonalities and prioritised shared themes. This procedure was followed for both the Resident Focus Group and the Community Stakeholder Focus Group.

The first Collaborative Forum began with a presentation of keys findings from the two Local Focus Groups. Residents (children and youth, older people and people with disabilities) and community stakeholders were asked if these findings reflected their respective discussions. Participants

were then divided into small mixed groups, with each group asked to discuss (three to four) broad questions derived from the findings of the two focus groups. Responses within the small groups, which were facilitated by one of the Project Team, were listed on post-its and used as a basis for feedback into a general group discussion. The group discussion identified topics that required the collection of evidence in the neighbourhoods in order to inform programmes and interventions for enhancing participation. The second Collaborative Forum followed the same structure but presented and discussed evidence gathered in the neighbourhood, obtaining feedback on the research and identifying the nature and focus of potential programmes and interventions.

Eights steps to conducting collaborative discussions

1. Keep participant numbers low, depending on the number of different participant groups (e.g. eight to 12 people);

2. Ensure good representation of participant groups;

3. Consider representativeness within each group (e.g. gender; age range; long-term versus new residents);

4. Consider what, if any, information needs to be presented for the discussion (e.g. evidence and research; examples of programmes/service; feedback from other discussions);

5. Consider what information is required from the discussion (e.g. views and perspectives on a particular topic; information for deriving research questions; a set of agreed recommendations);

6. Think about what perspective and insight you need from each contributing group;

7. Identify ways to give space and voice to individual and group contributions;
   - Opportunities for each person to speak
   - Individual written contributions
   - Charting of individual and group specific views
   - Pay attention to how attendees interact with each other in discussion

8. Design mechanisms to allow group deliberations;
   - Ranking of views in order of prioritisation
   - Small group collaborative exercises

How was the tool adapted for the 3-Cities Project: To ensure equal participation and representation of voice amongst the different groups, adapted versions of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) techniques (e.g. using graphical aids) were used to structure how participants took part in the group discussions. PLA principles of participatory involvement guided the design of mechanisms (e.g. instruments for bringing individual and collective voice into discussions) employed to equalise power between participants and to achieve a balance between the voices that were helping to direct the research. Central to these group processes was the development and piloting of guides relevant to, and suitable for, diverse participants. Using understandable and accessible language was a core element of this guide, as was finding an appropriate means of framing questions that engaged participants and stakeholders alike. Where participants had specific needs, careful consideration was given to: the accessibility of physical venues and discussion materials;

ways to foster mutual trust (where everyone has the right to communicate, to be heard and to be listened to); and how to support full participation, including one-to-one facilitation and third-party assistance.

2. Life-Course Interviews

About the tool: Individual Life-Course Interviews were used to explore personal experiences of participation and living in the neighbourhood from the perspectives of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. By using this tool, emphasis is placed on developing an understanding of a particular topic within the life story and life experiences of an individual. In the 3-Cities Project, the interviews were used to explore: the different meanings attributed to community participation at different points in the life course; daily participation routines in the context of people's neighbourhoods and the implications of personal and environmental change on participation through the life course. The interviews also allowed the Project Team to probe on topics related to the central research questions identified in the Collaborative Forum. The aim in each neighbourhood was to conduct three to four interviews per participant group.

How did the tool contribute to the voice-led approach?

Life-Course Interviews provided an opportunity for participants to tell their own story of engagement with the local neighbourhood, in their own words. Using Life-Course Interview techniques in developing programmes and interventions, a team moves away from the narrower notion of 'user', illustrating the subject matter within the actual lived experience of individuals. This helps identify other important factors to consider that may impact on programme and intervention design and implementation.

The tool afforded the participants the opportunity to direct and guide the interview process based on their individual experiences. The interviews helped individual participants to articulate what can often be taken for granted within their daily lives, but contributes to a fundamental understanding of the topic for the Project Team. The open part of the interview allowed participants to speak more conversationally in a more natural voice, in a role where they were not simply the interviewee. This mechanism also provided a means of privileging their knowledge and thus contributed to building a stronger rapport between the participant and the researcher. As a result, the final semi-structured portion was more effective.

What are the main steps of the tool: The procedure for conducting the Life-Course Interview was adapted from the interview structure of the Biographic-Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM). The BNIM technique is based on the researcher following an open approach to the interview and adopting an active listener role to provide space for the interviewee to present their own life narrative. It was thus an appropriate structure for the explorative approach of the 3-Cities project—while acknowledging that the interview structure also needed to account for research questions stemming from the first Collaborative Forum. There were three main parts to the life-course interview as used in the 3-Cities Project. The interview opened with an initial single question to elicit a life-course narrative; in this case the question was focused on community participation and people's relationship with their neighbourhood. During this process the interviewer notes key phrases and events the interviewee

discusses. The second part of the interview involves revisiting key phrases and events used in the person's narrative in the order discussed and using these cues to probe the narrative description. The third part of the interview followed a semi-structured format, with questions probing on topics identified in the Collaborative Forum but that may not have arisen during the first two parts of the interview. The findings of the Life-Course Interviews were used to inform the research presentation to the second Collaborative Forum.

Seven steps to conducting Life-Course Interviews

1. Clearly state that it is the participant's perspectives and experiences, in his or her own words, that the interview aims to capture;

2. Situate the subject matter in the life experiences of the participant;

3. Allow space for the interviewee to establish connections to the topic, by choosing a simple but direct open-ended question to begin the interview;

4. Build in a way of confirming the Project Team's understanding of the information they have received.

5. Find different ways to ask the same questions during the interview (e.g. structured and unstructured approaches);

6. Consider the specific information required from this interview that should form the basis of structured questions;

7. For specific participant groups, consider the use of supplementary material;
   - Photographs and visual aids
   - Oral aids
   - Weekly audio diary of experiences

How was the tool adapted for the 3-Cities Project: Specific consideration was given to the scale, the participant groups and the timeline of the 3-Cities Project in designing these interviews. The BNIM method, which can involve a three hour interview process and two interview sessions, was redesigned to be shorter (40 to 60 minutes) and require less intense engagement, with a greater weight given to the semi-structured portion of the interview. This was to facilitate the more effective participation of individuals from the different participant groups, the relatively short period of engagement in each neighbourhood, and the need to address key topics agreed in the Collaborative Forums. The interview guide and format were adapted to ensure language and questions were accessible for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. This involved, where appropriate, simplifying the structure of the open direct question in the first part of the interview and the semi-structured guide in the third part of the interview. For some individuals, the open narrative portion of the interview was more fragmented, and required additional verbal encouragement and support. In some cases, intermittent breaks and repeating questions using different phrasing benefited the interviewee and the interview process.

3. Go-Along Interviews

About the tool: Go-Along Interviews were used to capture insight into how individuals from the three participant groups accessed, used and experienced services (e.g. day-care services), amenities (e.g. parks and public spaces), activities (e.g. youth-club events), in and through their local urban environment. These interviews involved the participant bringing the researcher to venues of significance for them, and for their participation in the neighbourhood. The approach allowed participants greater control over the interview process, while permitting the Project Team to contextualise individual experiences of participation and service/amenity use.

What are the main steps of the tool: The Go-Along Interview guide and approach are adapted from a walking interview methodology and designed to place the research team in proximity to the daily experiences of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities concerning the subject matter. In preparing for the interview, the researcher first agrees the focus of the interview (e.g. what service/activity), the route and the mode of travel with the interviewee. The interview is based on a semi-structured interview guide, which is administered while accompanying the participant as he/she accesses a particular service or takes part in an activity, relevant to the research question. Questions and topics agreed at the first Collaborative Forum informed the development of this guide. The first part of the interview focuses on the daily life of participants and their experience of living and participating in the neighbourhood. Particular consideration is given to cues that emerge from the surrounding environment and the neighbourhood, or are identified by the researcher and the participant as they travel together. Through the journey, participants are encouraged to highlight places of significance to them in the local environment. The second part of the interview focuses on access to, use of, or participation in, the service/amenity/activity after arriving at the destination. Again, cues arising from the service/amenity/activity are used as a basis of probing questions on the experience of this form of participation for the participant. The findings of the Go-Along Interviews were used to inform the research presentation to the second Collaborative Forum.

How did the tool contribute to the voice-led approach?

The Go-Along Interviews provided insights into the use of services, amenities and activities within the neighbourhood by the three participant groups, and how these structures contributed to their lives. The interviews allowed the Project Team to contextualise the importance of different kinds of structures in interviewees' daily routines, and in their broader participation within the immediate neighbourhood, and in the city itself.

By focusing on the participant's experiential perspective, the interviews provided first-hand insight into the potential barriers and facilitators of how people take part in their neighbourhoods. The Go-Along Interviews also provide information on ways in which participants negotiate their environments and how location of residence, transport and social interaction shape their choices around participation and service/amenity/activity use. This tool allowed the Project Team to think about how different aspects of these structures could be improved or re-designed to enhance the experiences of the three participant groups.

How was the tool adapted for the 3-Cities Project: The Go-Along Interview method was based on an adapted version of walking interview methodologies. In contrast to walking interviews where the

emphasis is primarily on the route, the Go-Along Interviews explored the experience of the journey, its route, and the experience of a service/amenity/activity at a particular destination. This dual focus was to highlight how such journeys and destinations are fundamental to service/amenity/activity access and use, and how all three elements shape participation. Additional resources, such as photo elicitation and mapping, were used to capture and record further insights while undertaking the interview. The tool was further adapted in light of particular challenges relating to mobility where participants were given the opportunity to take part in the interview in a walk-along, ride-along or sit-down format, depending on physical mobility levels. As with the Life-Course Interview, the Go-Along guide was altered to ensure questions were accessible for children and youth, older people and people with disabilities. Where appropriate, participants with a physical and/or intellectual disability were also offered the opportunity to take part in this interview with the assistance of a family member or a personal assistant.

Seven steps to conducting Go-Along Interviews

1. Ask to accompany a participant when they are using a key service or amenity, or going about a part of their daily routine, that is relevant to the subject matter;
2. Agree the focus of the interview, the route and the mode of travel ahead of time and if possible travel the route ahead of the interview;
3. Develop a short interview guide to capture key information and to prompt the participant to speak about their experiences as they travel on their journey and as they participate in the service/amenity/activity;
4. Give time during the process to reflect on the different factors emerging from the environment and from the experience of service/amenity/activity that appear to be influencing outcomes for the individual;
5. Probe on these factors and other cues arising from the process and the interview conversation;
6. Take photographs of different aspects of the journey that are referenced by the participant or that appear to be influencing their experience;
7. Probe on whether this service/amenity/activity has implications for other areas of life.

4. Citizen Researcher Training Programme

About the tool: Children and youth, older people and people with disabilities from each neighbourhood were trained as researchers. The Programme involved the co-development of a research project with the Project Team to be conducted by participants within their neighbourhood to address the questions identified in the first Collaborative Forum. Harnessing research techniques such as photo elicitation and focus group facilitation, this process helped to ensure the relevance and validity of the 3-Cities Project to people's lives and to support residents to voice their priorities as a part of the research process.

What are the main steps of the tool: The Citizen Researcher Training Programme encompassed four workshops covering the main stages of research: developing a research question; designing a research study; collecting data and; interpreting and reporting what was found. Key issues around how to conduct research in an ethical manner were also covered in these workshops. Each workshop facilitated collaboration between the Project Team and the coming together of children and youth,

older people and people with disabilities to develop their projects on a step-by-step basis. The Project Team also accompanied the Citizen Researchers in collecting some of their data and supported the organisation and completion of focus-group discussions to feed into their project. The analysis of the information collected was used as a basis for the production and co-writing of Citizen Authored Briefs in each community. These Briefs were used to inform the research presentation to the second Collaborative Forum.

How was the tool adapted for the 3-Cities Project: The researcher training programme was developed in line with international best practice in the activation and empowerment of members of the public as researchers. This was a unique endeavour, given that it was the first time that individuals from the three groups of children and youth, older people and people with disabilities, with a wide range of abilities and intellectual capacities, had been brought together in such a training process. A training manual was developed to ensure that the training schedule and content of the training manual were accessible to all groups. Research scenarios, methodological examples and visual aids were featured throughout the manual and the workshop lesson-plan as illustrative tools and tutorials. Straightforward guidelines on what to do and not to do at each stage of the research process were presented within the manual. The facilitation of the workshops was delivered by two to three Project Team members, depending on the number of participants and their individual needs and capacities. Small working groups were established in each session to work through examples and research tasks, and projects conducted in partnership between participants from different backgrounds and with different abilities were encouraged. One-to-one facilitation was also provided where necessary.

How did the tool contribute to the voice-led approach?

The Citizen Research Training Programme offered a flexible partnership approach, between potentially marginalised groups of residents and the Project Team, to produce new knowledge about their experiences, and those of their peers. The Programme provided local children and youth, older people and people with disabilities with a way to contribute to and direct the research. It also provided a means of harnessing the insights of local residents on what it is like to live in their neighbourhood and supported residents to communicate their voices to community organisations, service providers, decision-makers and other local and national stakeholders. The findings of the citizen researcher projects offered learning for future service innovation and evaluation.

The Citizen Authored Briefs formed important templates for other citizen-voice projects and initiatives. Importantly, they were also distributed to key decision-makers locally in each community (e.g. family resource centre coordinators; community and enterprise development workers; primary health-care teams), as identified by the citizen researchers, and provided a mechanism for these residents to advocate for local change. Valuable by-products from the citizen research process included empowering participants to take a more active interest in local issues, and helping to embed the Project Team in valuable relational networks in each site.

5. Ethical Considerations

Although not a methodological tool, ethical considerations are paramount in any multi-stakeholder development process that aims to include potentially marginalised groups. The Project Lifecourse Project Team applied for and received ethical approval for the 3-Cities Project from the NUI Galway Ethics Committee. This involved submitting an ethics application (detailing the research objectives, methodology, recruitment strategy, key risks and ethical considerations), data-collection instruments and a study protocol for ethical review. It also involved developing and adhering to detailed, informed consent procedures when recruiting research participants. While such a process may neither be available, nor appropriate, for all programme and intervention development projects, key ethical considerations need to be factored into the design of these projects. Necessary ethical considerations include:

Informed consent: A process of informed consent should be implemented. Potential participants should be provided with information sheets in advance of taking part in the projects, and prior to consent for participation being requested. Information sheets and consent forms should be written in clear and understandable language. Where appropriate, illustrations and images can be used to assist in relaying the purpose and demands of the activity, and to increase a person's capacity to understand the research.

Ensure confidentiality: Measures should be put in place to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of participants is preserved where sensitive material is being discussed or supplied. These measures may include:

- Made-up names used to protect participants' identities on all information gathered;
- All information that could identify them will be removed from notes and files;
- All materials will be stored securely;
- Only team members will be allowed access to the information collected;
- In the case of group discussions and forums, all participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of fellow participants.

Withdrawal of participation: In both the case of individual interviews and group discussions, participants should be informed that they do not have to answer every question and can stop the interview and leave the room at any time. Participants should also be made aware (verbally and on the information sheet) that they may withdraw from the research after they have taken part before any information is used.

Dignity: The individual dignity, autonomy, equality and diversity of each participant should be of paramount importance in the research process. In the case of group discussions or forums, the research team should remind all participants that the discussion is built on mutual trust and consideration, where everyone has the right to communicate, be heard and be listened to. Whether in group settings or individual interviews, appropriate time and space for participants to consider their answers to questions and to respond should be provided.

Materials: The methodologies and materials developed for the project should be designed to ensure that the process itself does not serve to compound elements of stigmatisation or discrimination. All material should also be supplied in accessible formats for those individual participating.

Voice-Led Principles: Participant-Voice Framework

There are a number of key principles that can be identified from the individual tools and their respective contributions to the 3-Cities Project. Presented here as a Participant-Voice Framework, these principles can help harness the perspectives of marginalised groups in the design and development of new programmes or interventions in neighbourhood settings. They have the potential to offer particular value as collaborative processes that involve multiple stakeholders and that aim to create shared understandings of local challenges and required responses.

Understanding Context: It is essential to look at the wider context within which the programme or intervention will be implemented and how this context needs to be factored into the design of a development process. This means understanding the nature of the local neighbourhood environment where the intervention will operate, and the sort of life circumstances of the target population group (e.g. socio-economic background; health status; social networks; major life events) that the intervention will interact with.

Engage Ethically: Ensure the development process adheres to best-practice ethical guidelines with respect to the engagement with the different population target groups. This includes elements such as confidentiality, informed consent, handling of sensitive data, duty of care, and consideration of the range of participant capabilities. Multi-stakeholder development processes need to reflect and incorporate the contributions of these groups in a transparent way. Central to this process is keeping all stakeholders and participants informed of the scope and limitations of the project from the outset.
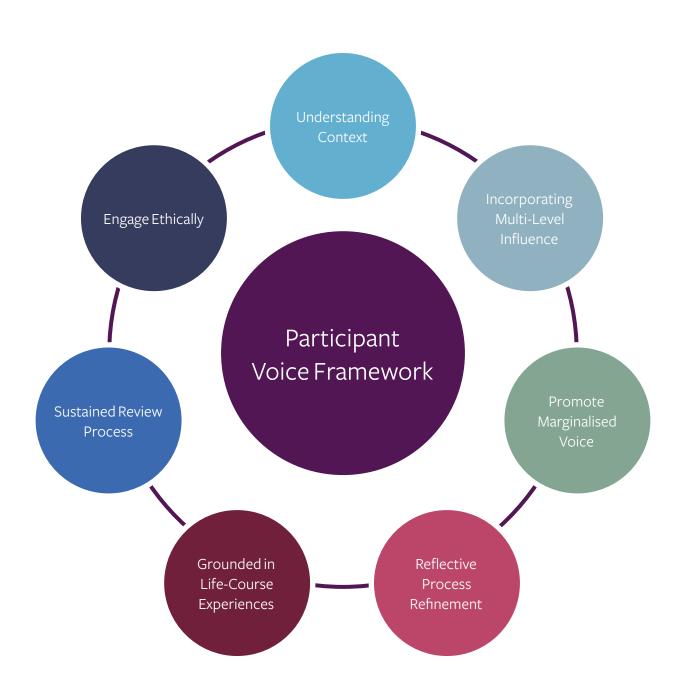
Incorporating Multi-Level Influence: Identify all individuals, organisations and sectors who will be involved in the delivery of the intervention, and who can influence impact, and incorporate their insights into the development process, together with those of the target population group. Consideration of including stakeholders likely to be informally and less obviously linked to the programme or intervention (e.g. volunteers; local shop outlets; café owners; religious representatives; other service delivery actors), as well as those formally connected.

Promote Marginalised Voice: Recognise and promote the importance of the voices of marginalised population groups that programmes or interventions will be targeting within the development process. While there is a need to involve all stakeholders in the process, drawing on multiple sources of insight and securing buy-in from key actors, there is also a need to consider the 'insider' knowledge of future users of the intervention and to ensure that it is their voices that are leading its development.

Reflective Process Refinement: Harness the views and perspectives of all participants to refine the approach and focus of the development process, and the related programmes and interventions. It is important that participants have the opportunity and the means to direct the development process at key points in the Project. This includes establishing the key issues that need to be addressed, the research evidence that is required to help address these issues, providing feedback on the evidence, and advising on outcomes of the development process (e.g. recommendations, programme structure; intervention design principles).

Grounded in Life-Course Experiences: Utilise the real-life experiences of the target population groups as evidence to inform the development process. There are benefits to grounding the design of new interventions in the diverse needs and preferences of individuals. It is, therefore, essential to acknowledge the multiple roles and life experiences of individuals, outside of being an intervention beneficiary, or user or participant. It is also important to consider how these roles and experiences may shape their interaction with an intervention, and how that intervention might impact on their broader lives.

Sustained Review Process: Commit to a periodic process of review to maintain the effectiveness and the relevance of the programme or intervention, over its duration. It is necessary to ensure the intervention or programme responds to the changing needs of individuals and the life-transitions that the population target groups will experience. Shifts in local neighbourhood context and how these shifts influence the intervention and programme also need to be captured and adapted to. Likewise, this process will help identify opportunities to take the intervention in new directions to enhance its impact on people's lives.

Participant Voice Framework

- Understanding Context
- Incorporating Multi-Level Influence
- Promote Marginalised Voice
- Reflective Process Refinement
- Grounded in Life-Course Experiences
- Sustained Review Process
- Engage Ethically

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